

House Committee on Health Policy, 2018
Loretta V. Bush, Chief Executive Officer, MPCA
Testimony Supporting HB 6016-6023

Good afternoon, Chairman Vaupel and members of the committee. My name is Loretta Bush, Chief Executive Officer of the Michigan Primary Care Association (MPCA). Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bills 6016-6023.

The Michigan Primary Care Association is the voice for 45 community-based health center organizations throughout Michigan. Our members provide comprehensive care, including medical, dental, mental health, substance use, and pharmacy services to more than 680,000 Michigan residents in over 300 communities.

Today, I'm not here to represent an industry or a profession, but rather to advocate for high quality, affordable community-based health services. Especially those services that have a proven track record of preventing or delaying sickness and death.

The MPCA supports the bill before the committee because they represent a long needed update to state policy for HIV testing and treatment. If enacted, this legislation will finally align Michigan with clinical best practices outlined by leading health experts.

In 2001, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) emphasized prevention services for HIV-infected persons and recommended policies for diagnosing HIV infections earlier to increase the number of HIV-infected persons who were aware of their infections and who were offered clinical and prevention services. To increase diagnosis of HIV infection, destigmatize the testing process, link clinical care with prevention, and ensure immediate access to clinical care for persons with newly identified HIV infection, IOM and other health professionals have encouraged adoption of routine HIV testing in all health-care settings.

In 2006, the CDC recommended routinized HIV screening in all adolescents and adults aged 13-64 years regardless of other recognized risk factors. Michigan health centers have made a concerted effort to routinize testing for HIV, but many policy barriers remain that have prevented us reaching full potential.

So, you may find yourselves asking, why is this important to health centers?

HIV disproportionately affects communities and populations served by health centers and early detection and early treatment can drastically reduce rates of transmission as well as decrease the risk of co-morbidities, such as Hepatitis C.

In 2016, the most recent year data is available, Michigan health centers performed 19,000 HIV tests. Unfortunately, we know that number could be far greater but Michigan's informed consent laws and separate consent form has stymied providing routine HIV testing at least once in a lifetime as a standard of care.

According to the Center for Disease Control, routine testing could reduce new HIV infections by greater than 30% per year if all infected person could learn their HIV status and adopt changes in behavior similar to those adopted by person already aware of their infection.

True to the health center mission, routine testing also increases the opportunity to provide comprehensive health services and promote linkages to clinical and prevention services to reduce barriers to ongoing care for patients.

For several years I was the State AIDS Director for what was then MDCH, I've trained many people to be pre and posttest counselors, I've given more HIV test results than I can remember and I've seen many advances relative to HIV and AIDS. One of the most important advances is that knowing your status early and getting into treatment increases the chances of survival for individuals living with HIV and is an effective tool for preventing new infections. This legislation removes an unnecessary barrier to routine HIV testing as a standard of care and to the goal of zero new infection.

The Michigan Primary Care Association whole heartedly urges your support of House Bills 6016-6023.